

There are many ways practiced commonly by the obeah man to injure his own enemy or that of his client. He may send to the intended victim a "duppy" (evil spirit). Or he may work with buried "poison," that is to say, he buries in the vicinity of the house of his intended victim a package containing rags, feathers, bones, and the like, after which the latter will fall sick and eventually die. Again he may introduce poison in his food by means of a third person. The obeah man may attain the object in view, that is to set obeah on his enemy, by merely making a cross or some other mark on the house, canoe, or some tool of the latter, or by shaking hands with him. It is even claimed that some "strong" obeah men are able to direct poisonous snakes to the bed of the intended victim. Sometimes such a sorcerer brings about the desired effect, owing to the great credulity of the people, who are so afraid of him that they do not even dare to denounce him. 754

MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL LIFE

The Indian girl is sold by her parents for a gun or a head of cattle, but she is rarely forced to become the wife of a man whom she does not love. Before giving their daughter away in marriage the parents will satisfy themselves that the suitor is able to provide for his future wife and that he understands the manufacture of hunting and fishing implements. 583

COURTSHIP.—The efficacy of certain drugs or herbs in stimulating virility, exciting venery, and in conquering the heart of a person of the opposite sex is believed in by these Indians, and by many Ladinos and Creoles as well. By allowing a few drops of such a "love medicine" (M.: *yamni kfikaya adika*; T.: *yamni talnin pananbas*; U.: *yamka talnaka dikabasta*) to fall on the clothes, handkerchief, head, or body of a person, the affection of the latter may be obtained. Other herbs used in a similar manner will produce the opposite effect; such an infusion (M.: *mibara kfikaya adika*; T.: *ba talnin pananbas*; P.: *ma isikni talnin pananbas*; U.: *di dutka talnaka dikabasta*) is used to separate lovers who will thenceforth have a profound repugnance toward each other. Certain old people are supposed to be able to prepare very efficacious remedies of this kind, which they will sell for as much as \$5. Should, however, the secret of the preparation be communicated, the charge will be about five times higher. A preparation of the Spanish fly or blister beetle, of which two varieties exist, a small brown one and a larger one which is black with longitudinal yellow bars, is believed also by some to act as a love potion; others again say that it will produce craziness. In reality this insect is a poison, but may be used in medicine as a diuretic and vesicatory. The Ladinos believe that practically all the Indians and Creoles of [225] [278]

BETROTHAL AND TRIAL MARRIAGE.—The children are sometimes engaged by their respective parents while still in early infancy, even at the age of 5 or 6 years. The young boy makes his fiancée and her parents a small present, and helps them occasionally in their work. When she arrives at the age of puberty (about 10 years) he takes her as his wife. The man is considered a member of his wife's family and he goes to live in the house of his parents-in-law. When the family enlarges he will build a house of his own near by. Perhaps a misunderstanding of the above facts has led M. W. (309) to state that a system of trial marriage existed in those days among the Miskito. According to this author the probationary period lasted about two years, at the end of which a feast was prepared and then the union was considered legitimate, there being no ceremony. To-day the young man marries generally at the age of from 16 to 18, the girl at about 12. 584
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WEDDING.—Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 253; French edit.: II, 267-268) gives the following account of the marriage ceremony of the Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century. The father, after assuring himself that the lover was an expert hunter and fisher, ordered his daughter to bring a calabash of a beverage prepared from pineapples and honey; the suitor drank one-half of the contents and then tendered the remainder to his future wife to drink. According to this same author the buccaneers had the habit of buying a Miskito woman for a knife, ax, or hatchet, upon their arrival at Cabo Gracias a Dios. She was obliged to remain with him during the time he stayed at the settlement and to supply him with the products of the plantation, while he went out hunting and fishing. (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 249). 585

Among the Sumu the nuptial ceremony is performed by an elderly man who first gives the couple a long talk. Then the two aspirants join the thumb of the right hand, whereupon he separates their hands by cutting through with his own hand. There is no record of the chiefs having possessed the *jus primæ noctis* as appears to have been the case with the Chorotega (Orotiña) of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Marriage with other tribes was not permitted in former days by the Sumu, and the children of strangers were killed. This accounts for the fact that the Sumu have kept themselves free from foreign admixtures, whereas the Miskito intermarry with all races and absorb everything. The Sumu are very jealous of their wives and until recent times did not allow them to converse with strangers. 585
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MOTHER-IN-LAW TABOO.—As soon as the marriage ceremony has taken place the young Sumu husband must not speak any more to his mother-in-law, nor even look at her. When he is at home she remains in her own apartment, which is separated from the remainder 606

Among the *Mosquito* and *Sumo* a man who has been wronged is considered a coward if he does not avenge himself. If revenge fails, both the offended man and the perpetrator of the offense are supposed to commit suicide. A thief, when caught, must return double the amount stolen. A creditor may help himself to his debtor's property, or he may destroy the property of a third person, in which case the debtor must pay the damage (*Mosquito*). An adulterous wife is beaten and forced to reveal the name of her lover, who is fined. A murderer is killed, unless he commits suicide, and his memory is dishonored. There is, however, no dishonor in poisoning an enemy, the method employed for most murders.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

A man and woman may agree to marry, or, more rarely, the girl's parents may make marriage arrangements without her consent. Child betrothals are common. Cross-cousin marriage is frequent, but marriage between parallel-cousins and closer relations is forbidden. *Mosquito* and *Sumo* chiefs and shamans have several wives, and the *Pays* of Río Platano and Río Paulaya practice polygyny, as do the *Jicaque*.

Before marriage a man must pass through various ordeals, pay the bride's family an agreed sum, and prepare a field for his prospective wife. The wedding is a simple ceremony. The levirate and sororate are practiced, and the many possible exceptions to this rule are adjusted by payments. A man may abandon his wife if she is barren. Divorce is accomplished by means of payments to the families of offended parties. The woman always keeps the children. Among numerous relationship taboos are the important mother-in-law taboo and the prohibition on a man's speaking to his sister-in-law and to other close female relatives by marriage.

LIFE CYCLE

Childbirth.—The *Pays* and *Mosquito* build special confinement huts; the *Sumo* partition off a corner of the house. During parturition the mother is aided by another woman who cuts the cord with a piece of bamboo. The afterbirth and umbilical cord are buried. Among the *Pays* a midwife is regarded by parents and child as a blood relative. This belief is said to have originated among the *Mosquito* and diffused to the *Sumo* and *Poya*. The second of twins and deformed children are killed. Some female children were killed at birth.

Sumo and *Mosquito* women bathe immediately after bearing a child. *Pays* women on the third day. *Sumo* women take a steam bath but use no special structure; in other tribes they bathe in the river. This bath ends a period of ritual impurity. *Mosquito* women, however, are considered impure for one or two weeks. Women also observe a special diet. The return of the mother to the house is celebrated with a ceremony.